

What is claimed is:

*Sub All*

1. A method for sourcing a featured item for an on-line group-buying sale, comprising:

communicating to a supplier a featured item quantity and a featured item time reservation;

receiving the supplier's consent to reserve the featured item quantity and the negotiated featured item time reservation;

conducting an on-line group-buying sale for the featured item during the featured item time reservation, selling at least a portion of the featured item quantity to one or more buyers; and

sending shipment instructions to the supplier regarding featured items sold in the on-line group-buying sale.

2. The method of claim 1, further comprising:

executing a binding agreement with the supplier regarding the featured item quantity and the featured item time reservation, wherein the binding agreement requires the supplier to retain the featured item quantity for the featured item time reservation.

3. The method of claim 2, further comprising:

providing the supplier with consideration in exchange for the supplier's execution of the binding agreement.

4. The method of claim 3 wherein the consideration is at least one of a reserve price, an agreement to reserve another featured item, and a deposit.

5. The method of claim 1, further comprising:  
communicating to the supplier payment terms regarding the featured item  
to be sold during the on-line group-buying sale before conducting the on-line group-  
buying sale; and  
paying the supplier for a number of featured items sold during the on-line  
group-buying sale.

6. A method for sourcing a featured item for an on-line group-buying  
sale, comprising:  
receiving from a seller a featured item quantity and a featured item time  
reservation;  
negotiating with the seller to determine a negotiated featured item quantity  
and a negotiated featured item time reservation;  
executing a binding agreement with the seller regarding the negotiated  
featured item quantity and the negotiated featured item time reservation, wherein the  
binding agreement requires retention of the negotiated featured item quantity for the  
negotiated featured item time reservation; and  
receiving shipment instructions from the seller regarding a number of  
featured items sold during the on-line group-buying sale.

7. The method of claim 6, further comprising:  
retrieving the number of featured items sold during the on-line group-  
buying sale from a warehouse; and  
packaging the number of featured items sold during the on-line group-  
buying sale for shipment to buyers.

1 8. The method of claim 6, further comprising:  
2 receiving consideration from the seller in exchange for executing the  
3 binding agreement.

1 9. The method of claim 8 wherein the consideration comprises at least  
2 one of a reserve price, an agreement to reserve another featured item, and a deposit.

1 10. The method of claim 6 wherein the negotiated featured item quantity  
2 equals the featured item quantity.

1 11. The method of claim 6 wherein the negotiated featured item time  
2 reservation equals the featured item time reservation.

1 12. The method of claim 6, further comprising:  
2 communicating to the seller payment terms regarding the featured items to  
3 be sold during the on-line group-buying sale.

1 13. A computing system for sourcing a featured item for an on-line  
2 group-buying sale, comprising:

3 a supplier communications module configured to send a supplier a featured  
4 item quantity and a featured item time reservation;

5 a virtual inventory module configured to receive the supplier's consent to  
6 reserve a negotiated featured item quantity and a negotiated featured item time  
7 reservation; and

8 an on-line group-buying mechanism configured to conduct at least one on-  
9 line group-buying sale during the negotiated featured item time reservation, selling at  
10 least a portion of the negotiated featured item quantity to one or more buyers.

1           14. The system of claim 13 wherein the virtual inventor module is  
2 further configured to receive a binding agreement from the supplier regarding the  
3 negotiated featured item quantity and the negotiated featured item time reservation,  
4 wherein the binding agreement requires the supplier to retain the negotiated featured item  
5 quantity for the negotiated featured item time reservation.

1           15. The system of claim 13, further comprising:  
2 a data repository configured to retain data regarding the negotiated featured  
3 item quantity and the negotiated featured item time reservation.

1           16. The system of claim 13 wherein the supplier communications  
2 module is further configured to send shipment instructions to the supplier regarding a  
3 number of featured items sold during the on-line group-buying sale.

1           17. The system of claim 13 wherein the supplier communications  
2 module is further configured to provide the supplier with data regarding the seller's  
3 consideration for obtaining the supplier's consent to be contractually bound to retain the  
4 negotiated featured item quantity for the negotiated time duration.

1           18. The system of claim 17 wherein the consideration data comprises at  
2 least one of a reserve price, an agreement to reserve another featured item, and a deposit.

1           19. The system of claim 13 wherein the negotiated featured item  
2 quantity equals the featured item quantity.

1           20. The system of claim 13 wherein the negotiated feature item time  
2 reservation equals the featured item time reservation.